



Mid-Week

Bible Study and Prayer
Wednesdays 6:45pm – 8pm



led by: Pastor Josh Franklin, Good Hope Baptist Church (www.goodhopechurch.org and www.joshfranklin.org)

Empty Words from Evil Hearts (When Judgment Comes for False Professors)

Matthew 7:21-23 (NKJV) - ²¹ "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

²² Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'

²³ And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

John Newton, author of Amazing Grace, said, **"If I ever reach Heaven I expect to find three wonders there: first, to meet some I had not thought to see there; second, to miss some I had thought to meet there; and third, the greatest wonder of all, to find myself there."**

J. C. Ryle says, "The Lord Jesus winds up the Sermon on the Mount by a passage of heart-piercing application. He turns from false prophets to false professors, from unsound teachers to unsound hearers" (*Expository Thoughts on the Gospel: St. Matthew* [London: James Clarke, 1965], pp. 69-70).

Why are (falsely) professed "Christians" deceived about their salvation?^a

1) Many professed Christians—and even many true Christians—hold a false doctrine of assurance.

Often it is because the person who witnessed to them told them that all they had to do was make a profession of faith, walk an aisle, raise a hand, say a prayer, and never doubt what the Lord had done in their lives. Perhaps they have been taught that to ever doubt their salvation is to doubt God's Word and integrity. Unfortunately, many evangelists, pastors, and personal workers attempt to certify a person's salvation apart from the convicting work of the Holy Spirit and the evidence of fruit with continuance in obedience to the Word (John 8:31). But we have no right to assure a person of something we cannot be certain is true. God's own Holy Spirit will witness His reality to those who truly belong to Him (Rom. 8:14-16). Peter makes clear that one's calling and choosing are made secure by increasing qualities of fruitfulness that demonstrate the genuineness of salvation and eliminate stumbling over doubt (2 Pet. 1:3-11). And our Lord teaches that some people appear saved, but are not (see Matt. 13:20-22). Quick and easy assurance can deceive.

2) A failure of self-examination.

Paul tells us, "Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?" (2 Cor. 13:5). Such examination looks at the heart and the inner motives and desires to see if they are set toward God's holiness and glory. Even the weakest Christian has pure longings in his heart for righteousness—even though he lets his flesh hinder their fulfillment (Rom. 7:14-25).

^a Adapted from *MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Matthew 1-7*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 474ff.

John tells us, "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (John 1:8-9). A person who is not concerned about having his present sins cleansed has good reason to doubt that his past sin has been forgiven. A person who has no desire to come to the Lord for continued cleansing has reason to doubt that he ever came to the Lord to receive salvation.

When a couple lives together without being married, when a person practices homosexuality, is deceptive and dishonest in business, is hateful and vengeful, or habitually practices any sin without remorse or repentance, such persons cannot be Christian—no matter what sort of experience they claim to have had or what sort of testimony they now make.

God's Word is explicit: "Do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:9-10).

Again Paul warns, "For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience" (Eph. 5:5-6). In each of those extremely somber warnings Paul pleads with his readers not to be deceived.

The person who professes to be a Christian but who habitually and unrepentantly continues in known sin makes out God to be liar, because His Word expressly denies that any such person belongs to Him (1 John 3:6-10).

3) An excessive concentration on religious activity.

Attending church, hearing sermons, singing songs of the faith, reading the Bible, attending Bible studies, and many other perfectly good and helpful activities can actually insulate a person from the very God he is supposedly worshiping and serving. Those things can cause a believer to think he is being faithful and obedient, when in reality he may not be; and they can cause an unbeliever to think he is saved, when in reality he is not.

4) The fair exchange, or balancing out, approach.

Instead of confessing and asking forgiveness for his sins, a person may give himself the benefit of the doubt and rationalize his salvation by thinking that the good things he does balance out the bad, that the positive cancels the negative. But in the first place, apart from God it is impossible to do anything that is truly good, because "there is none who does good, there is not even one," Paul tells us (Rom. 3:12), quoting David (Ps. 14:1-3; 53:1-3). In the second place, it is the sin itself—not an excess or imbalance of it—that separates us from God and brings death and damnation (Rom. 5:12; 6:23). Whatever good we might somehow accomplish would not cancel those consequences of sin, any more than eating right and exercising will save the life of a person infected with a deadly disease. His only hope is in receiving a cure for the disease, not in trying to balance off its deadly effect by keeping his body otherwise healthy. Isaiah said that the best deeds of men before God are as "a filthy garment" (Isa. 64:6).

Apart from outright hypocrites and the blatantly disobedient, there are two other common kinds of deceived people who believe they are Christians when they are not. **One is the superficial person**, the one who has had little or no instruction in the gospel and who thinks that his attending Sunday school as a child, having been baptized, being a church member, or other such things put him in good standing with God.

The other type of person is much more knowledgeable about the Bible and the gospel, and is often heavily involved in church activities of various sorts. But he lives in a constant state of sinfulness, with no thought of confessing and forsaking his sin or of seeking after righteousness. He looks to feelings, experiences, healings, angels, earthly material blessings, promises, and a host of other external things for proof of his salvation. He is not concerned about decreasing sin or increasing righteousness. He is not concerned about God's commands, God's standards, or God's glory, but only what he can get out of God for himself.

The words of an engraving from the cathedral of Lübeck, Germany, beautifully reflect our Lord's teaching here:

Thus speaketh Christ our Lord to us, You call Me master and obey Me not, you call Me light and see Me not, you call Me the way and walk Me not, you call Me life and live Me not, you call Me wise and follow Me not, you call Me fair and love Me not, you call Me rich and ask Me not, you call Me eternal and seek Me not, if I condemn thee, blame Me not.

False Miracles??

John Phillips - In Matthew 7:22 the Lord mentioned false claims of prophesying, casting out demons, and doing "many wonderful works" in His name. He repudiated it all. In our generation many make similar claims, but examination of their doctrine (or lack of it) shows them to be highly suspect. Indeed we are face to face today with a massive deception launched against the church by the enemy of souls. This campaign is supported by all kinds of phenomena of an excitable nature, much of which is clearly occult. The New Testament repeatedly warns us about the end-time occult invasion (2 Thessalonians 2:8-11; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Timothy 4:1-4; 1 John 4:1-3).

William MacDonald^b - From these verses we learn that not all miracles are of divine origin and that not all miracle workers are divinely accredited. A miracle simply means that a supernatural power is at work. That power may be divine or satanic. **Satan may empower his workers to cast out demons temporarily, in order to create the illusion that the miracle is divine.**

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS ABOUT DIRECTION, NOT PERFECTION!! The Lord knows well that even His most faithful disciples will fail, stumble, and fall into sin. Otherwise He would not have told us to pray, "Forgive us our debts" (Matt. 6:12). And when "we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). No Christian is sinless, but the fact that we continually confess our sins, seek the Lord's forgiveness, and long for righteousness (Matt. 5:6) is evidence that we belong to Him.

TEACHER GUIDE:

BUT HAVE YOU BEEN BORN AGAIN???^c

Sadly, it is really quite easy to be accorded the status of an evangelical Christian without being born-again. The process is essentially cultural. That is, if you will work at displaying certain cultural traits, you will be accepted. Here is how you do it.

First, work on your vocabulary. Biblical history records that when the Gileadites and the Ephraimites were warring, the Gileadites developed a password to detect Ephraimites who when captured pretended to be Gileadites—the word shibboleth, which the Ephraimites (who had trouble with the sh sound) could only pronounce Sibboleth. It worked perfectly on the unsuspecting enemy, much to their dismay and demise (see Judges 12:4-7). We evangelicals have our shibboleths, but they are unfortunately rather easy to pick up. They are words like fellowship, brother, and born-again. Use these words with the right inflection and you are in.

Second, emulate certain social conventions. It is most effective to share similar attitudes about alcohol and tobacco, modesty and style of clothing, and so on. If you show the same likes and dislikes (especially dislikes), you will probably pass as a Christian. The ease with which one can assume the social conventions of the faithful has been facilitated by evangelical Christianity's gradual alignment with secular culture's materialism, pleasure-seeking, entertainment, economics, and fads.

Third, have the right heritage. If your parents are respectable Christians or, even better, Christian workers, you will probably be assumed to be a believer. And if you affect some civilities that apparently reflect a godly heritage, such as attending evening service and prayer meeting or tithing, you will be accepted as a Christian. Sometimes the desire of overly anxious parents to see their children become born-again has contributed to the heritage = salvation delusion. Some well-meaning parents have manipulated their children into a bogus confession of faith, baptism, and church membership. For these and similar reasons multitudes of

^b William MacDonald and Arthur Farstad, *Believer's Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997), Mt 7:22.

^c R. Kent Hughes, *Preaching the Word – The Sermon on the Mount* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001), 253.

unregenerate evangelicals are comfortably ensconced in their churches. And no one questions the authenticity of their faith!

FROM INTRO [KENT HUGHES]: *By evangelical I mean a person who believes the Bible is divinely inspired and infallible and subscribes to doctrinal formulations that teach the total depravity of man, the inerrancy of the Scriptures, the substitutionary death and atonement of Christ, salvation by unmerited grace through personal faith in Christ (not through good works), the necessity of a transformed life, the existence of a literal Heaven and Hell, and the visible personal return of Jesus Christ to set up his kingdom of righteousness. Moreover, they believe in the proclamation of the gospel and the mission of winning the world for Christ.*

The question is, why would anyone willfully take up the so-called "narrow way" apart from being born-again? For many it is the path of least resistance. To do otherwise would impair comfortable family and social relationships. Besides, evangelical Christianity's preachers dominate the religious media. Its recording artists sell hundreds of thousands of CDs. A billion dollars is spent annually on its publications. Being born-again can be profitable. Jesus saves, but he also sells.

We also must remember that the Biblical lifestyle is a good way to live. Families that subscribe to Biblical models tend to be happier and healthier and stay together longer. It is not at all surprising that Christianity, being so wholesome, attracts those who would practice its style without knowing its inner reality. The human race has an incredible capacity for self-delusion, and nowhere is that more perfectly demonstrated than in the lives of thousands of evangelicals who are not born-again. What wise Solomon said in his day describes some people in our day too: "those who are pure in their own eyes, and yet are not cleansed of their filth" (Proverbs 30:12).

The Master holds up the example of people who give a spectacular profession of belief as they stand before Christ, but they will be rejected on the day of judgment. John Stott has noted that this confession is remarkable on four points. First, it is polite. They address Christ as "Lord." Even today that is a courteous, tolerant way to refer to Christ. Second, the confession is orthodox. The word "Lord" (*kurios*) can mean "Sir," but it is also a divine title. The context with its allusions to God as Christ's Father and Christ as Judge demands that we see it as the latter—God. Third, the confession is fervent. "Lord, Lord" is an appellation of enthusiasm and zeal. Fourth, the confession is public. These professing believers did not make some private confession of allegiance to Christ but did it in front of everyone. Moreover, they even did public works in the name of Christ. This is a model confession, a beautiful one. So what is wrong with it? Nothing! It would be wonderful if we all would make confessions like this.

But there is a problem. Correct orthodox belief will not give us eternal life. This is not to say that correct belief is not necessary for salvation—it is. Paul makes that clear in Romans 10:9, 10:

If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

A man who refuses to say "Lord, Lord" will never enter the kingdom of heaven. All true Christians say, "Lord, Lord." But not all who say "Lord, Lord" are true Christians! Intellectual orthodoxy does not indicate saving faith. You can be absolutely correct in your belief about Christ's nature and person, his substitutionary atonement, his resurrection, and his return, you can have even fought against heretics, and yet not be truly saved.

Life Application Commentary - Jesus exposed those people who sounded religious and did religious deeds but had no personal relationship with him. Not sincere followers who had come to him for salvation, they were masquerading as disciples. These people knew in their hearts that they were false. False prophets will even be able to *prophesy* (referring not just to telling the future, but to teaching), *drive out demons*, and *perform many miracles*. Jesus warned that "false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and miracles to deceive the elect—if that were possible" ([Mark 13:22](#) niv). Paul warned against counterfeit miracles, signs, and wonders in [2 Thessalonians 2:9](#). Claims to great power, invoking the name of Christ (*in your name*, see [Mark 9:38](#); [Acts 19:13-20](#)), and powerful deeds will be no guarantee for heaven. Jesus will send away those who do not know him personally. They may have done impressive deeds, but they are *evildoers*. Jesus will say, *I never knew you. Away from me* (see [Psalm 6:8](#)). In other words, "I never had a personal relationship with you, and I never went with you

to do these deeds you claim. You can have no part in my kingdom."

John MacArthur^d - The Lord is not speaking to irreligious people, to atheists or agnostics. Nor is he speaking to pagans, heretics, or apostates. He is speaking specifically to people who are devotedly religious—but who are deluded in thinking they are on the road to heaven when they are really on the broad road to hell. They are not unlike those in the last days who Paul says will hold a form of godliness but will deny its power (2 Tim. 3:5).

Various polls in recent years have estimated that perhaps fifty percent of Americans identify themselves as born-again Christians. But on the basis of the Bible's description of true believers and the fact that few (cf. Matt. 7:14) really come on God's terms, those estimates could not be remotely correct. By scriptural standards, it is hard to believe that even half of the church members in the United States are true believers.

The New Testament not only gives extremely high standards for judging the true Christian life, but also gives many warnings about spiritual self-deception in regard to salvation. In Matthew 25 Jesus tells of the five foolish virgins who pretended devotion to the bridegroom but missed meeting him because of their unpreparedness (vv. 1-12), and of those professed believers (symbolized as goats) who are surprised that the Lord rejects them because they never truly served Him (vv. 32-33, 41-46).

What lulls people into such deception? First of all, many professed Christians—and even many true Christians—hold a false doctrine of assurance. Often it is because the person who witnessed to them told them that all they had to do was make a profession of faith, walk an aisle, raise a hand, say a prayer, and never doubt what the Lord had done in their lives. Perhaps they have been taught that to ever doubt their salvation is to doubt God's Word and integrity. Unfortunately, many evangelists, pastors, and personal workers attempt to certify a person's salvation apart from the convicting work of the Holy Spirit and the evidence of fruit with continuance in obedience to the Word (John 8:31). But we have no right to assure a person of something we cannot be certain is true. God's own Holy Spirit will witness His reality to those who truly belong to Him (Rom. 8:14-16).

Peter makes clear that one's calling and choosing are made secure by increasing qualities of fruitfulness that demonstrate the genuineness of salvation and eliminate stumbling over doubt (2 Pet. 1:3-11). And our Lord teaches that some people appear saved, but are not (see Matt. 13:20-22). Quick and easy assurance can deceive.

A second contributor to self-deception is failure of self-examination. Through a faulty and presumptuous view of God's grace, some professed believers blithely go through life oblivious to and unconcerned about their sins. Yet the Lord tells His people to examine their lives each time they come to His table (1 Cor. 11:28). Paul tells us, "Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?" (2 Cor. 13:5). Such examination looks at the heart and the inner motives and desires to see if they are set toward God's holiness and glory. Even the weakest Christian has pure longings in his heart for righteousness—even though he lets his flesh hinder their fulfillment (Rom. 7:14-25).

John tells us, "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (John 1:8-9). A person who is not concerned about having his present sins cleansed has good reason to doubt that his past sin has been forgiven. A person who has no desire to come to the Lord for continued cleansing has reason to doubt that he ever came to the Lord to receive salvation.

When a couple lives together without being married, when a person practices homosexuality, is deceptive and dishonest in business, is hateful and vengeful, or habitually practices any sin without remorse or repentance, such persons cannot be Christian—no matter what sort of experience they claim to have had or what sort of testimony they now make. God's Word is explicit: "Do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:9-10). Again Paul warns, "For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience" (Eph. 5:5-6). In each of those extremely somber warnings Paul pleads with his readers not to be deceived.

^d Most of this handout is adapted from *MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Matthew 1-7*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 474ff.

The person who professes to be a Christian but who habitually and unrepentantly continues in known sin makes out God to be liar, because His Word expressly denies that any such person belongs to Him (1 John 3:6-10).

A third cause of self-deception is inordinate concentration on religious activity. *Attending church, hearing sermons, singing songs of the faith, reading the Bible, attending Bible studies, and many other perfectly good and helpful activities can actually insulate a person from the very God he is supposedly worshiping and serving. Those things can cause a believer to think he is being faithful and obedient, when in reality he may not be; and they can cause an unbeliever to think he is saved, when in reality he is not.*

A fourth cause of self-deception is what may be called the fair exchange, or balancing out, approach. *Instead of confessing and asking forgiveness for his sins, a person may give himself the benefit of the doubt and rationalize his salvation by thinking that the good things he does balance out the bad, that the positive cancels the negative. But in the first place, apart from God it is impossible to do anything that is truly good, because "there is none who does good, there is not even one," Paul tells us (Rom. 3:12), quoting David (Ps. 14:1-3; 53:1-3). In the second place, it is the sin itself—not an excess or imbalance of it—that separates us from God and brings death and damnation (Rom. 5:12; 6:23). Whatever good we might somehow accomplish would not cancel those consequences of sin, any more than eating right and exercising will save the life of a person infected with a deadly disease. His only hope is in receiving a cure for the disease, not in trying to balance off its deadly effect by keeping his body otherwise healthy. Isaiah said that the best deeds of men before God are as "a filthy garment" that is, a menstrual cloth (Isa. 64:6).*

Apart from outright hypocrites and the blatantly disobedient, there are two other common kinds of deceived people who believe they are Christians when they are not. One is the superficial person, the one who has had little or no instruction in the gospel and who thinks that his attending Sunday school as a child, having been baptized, being a church member, or other such things put him in good standing with God.

The other type of person is much more knowledgeable about the Bible and the gospel, and is often heavily involved in church activities of various sorts. But he lives in a constant state of sinfulness, with no thought of confessing and forsaking his sin or of seeking after righteousness. He looks to feelings, experiences, healings, angels, earthly material blessings, promises, and a host of other external things for proof of his salvation. He is not concerned about decreasing sin or increasing righteousness. He is not concerned about God's commands, God's standards, or God's glory, but only what he can get out of God for himself.

A Jew could use the term lord simply as a title of respect and honor, given to any political, military, or religious leader, including teachers. But for those people to say, Lord, Lord, suggests much more than human respect, as their following comments make clear. That they claimed to have prophesied, cast out demons, and performed miracles in Jesus' name indicates they acknowledged Him as Lord in a supernatural way. Lord was a common Jewish substitute title for Jehovah, or Yahweh, which name they considered too holy to utter. Therefore to address Jesus as Lord was to address Him as the one true God. To address Him as Lord, Lord was to add a spirit of intense zeal to demonstrate strength of devotion and dedication. In verse 22, the three references to your name are emphatic and convey the significance of who He is. Jesus is therefore talking about those who make a profession of faith in Him. These people claim to be followers of the God of Israel, the Creator and Lord of all earth. Not only that, but they acknowledge Jesus Himself to be divine, because they will say to Me [that is, to Jesus] on that day, "Lord, Lord." And the fact that they have claimed so many outstanding works in His name tells us they are especially fervent religious workers.

The final judgment, on that day, is presented here in general, without reference to the distinction between the separate tribunals for believers (2 Cor. 5:10) and for unbelievers (Rev. 20:11-15). That day is a frequently used reference to the era of divine judgment known throughout Scripture as "the day of the Lord" (Isa. 2:12; Joel 2:1; Mal. 4:5; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Pet. 3:10; etc.). Matthew uses that day here and in 24:36, where it refers to the second coming of the Savior. It is noteworthy that the second coming parable of the ten virgins (Matt. 25:1-13) makes reference to those virgins who are shut out of the kingdom as crying out, "Lord, Lord," to which He also replies, "I do not know you" (vv. 11-12). These few passages together reveal that Matthew has in mind the unspecified season of judgment that will accompany the return of Jesus Christ.

That some of the ones Jesus is talking about here are true believers is shown by His saying, Not everyone and many. The same many who entered the wide gate (v. 13) are now at the end of the broad way facing the Judge. For some

people, however, the claim Lord, Lord will be legitimate, because Jesus will have indeed been their Lord on earth and they will have served Him genuinely.

If Jesus is speaking about the great white throne judgment, many professing believers who are not genuine will already have spent centuries in hell awaiting their final judgment (see Luke 16:23-26; Acts 1:25). Because they were so zealous and active and diligent in religious work—in the Lord's own name—they are incredulous that they are even standing before Christ to be judged. Even at that time they will address Christ as Lord and speak to Him in desperation with the greatest respect and sincerity. Their words and their works will seem impressive to them, but their lives will not support the claim of their lips. In Luke 6:46 Jesus said, "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"

It is not the one who simply claims the Lord, but the one who does the will of My Father who is in heaven who is saved. The issue is obedience to the Word of God. "If you abide in My Word, then you are truly disciples of Mine," Jesus said (John 8:31; cf. 6:66-69; Matt. 24:13; Col. 1:22-23; 1 Tim. 4:16; Heb. 3:14; 10:38-39; 1 John 2:19). Salvation and obedience to the will of God are inseparable, as the writer of Hebrews makes clear: "He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation" (5:9; cf. Rom. 1:5; 6:16; 15:18; 16:19, 26; 1 Pet. 1:2, 22).

Jesus' word to the disobedient claimers will be, I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness. All their words of respect and honor and all their works of dedication and devotion will be declared empty and worthless. They may have had God's name in their mouths, but rebellion was in their hearts.

His saying, I never knew you, does not, of course, mean that Jesus was unaware of their identity. He knows quite well who these persons are; they are deceived professing Christians whose lives were spent in the practice [of] lawlessness.

"To know" was a Hebrew idiom that represented intimate relations. It was frequently used of marital intimacy (see Gen. 4:1, 17; etc.; where "had relations" is literally "knew" as in the kjv). It was also used of God's special intimacy with His chosen people Israel and with all of those who trust in Him. In a unique and beautiful way the Lord "knows those who take refuge in Him" (Nah. 1:7). The Good Shepherd knows His sheep intimately (John 10:1-14).

Jesus therefore will say to those who claim Him but never trusted in Him, I never knew you. "I have never known you as My disciples, and you have never known Me as your Lord and Savior. We have no intimate part of each other You chose your kingdom, and it was not My kingdom." Depart from Me is the resulting final sentence to hell, and is identical in thought to the judgment of Matthew 25:41 at the Lord's return: "Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels." The lake of fire awaits all false professors (Rev. 20:15).

Practice lawlessness is a present participle in the Greek, indicating continuous, regular action, and identifies the unforgiven sin and unrighteous life patterns of those claimers of salvation. You continually and habitually practice lawlessness is the idea. Profession of Christ and practice of lawlessness are totally incompatible. A good tree cannot bear that sort of fruit (Matt. 7:18; John 3:4-10).

The Lord knows well that even His most faithful disciples will fail, stumble, and fall into sin. Otherwise He would not have told us to pray, "Forgive us our debts" (Matt. 6:12). And when "we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). No Christian is sinless, but the fact that we continually confess our sins, seek the Lord's forgiveness, and long for righteousness (Matt. 5:6) is evidence that we belong to Him. God's will may not be the perfection of the true believer's life, but it is the direction of it.

Those who continually practice lawlessness, however, give evidence that they do not belong to Christ. They do not recognize or confess their sins or hunger for righteousness, because they have no part of Christ. All religious activity, no matter how orthodox and fervent, that does not result from obedience to the lordship of Christ and the pursuit of His glory is rebellion against the law of God, which demands heart conformity.

This passage is all the more amazing when one considers the impressive works that those professing believers claim to have accomplished. They tell the Lord, Did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?

As already mentioned, we know from verse 21 (not everyone) that some of these claims will be made by genuine believers. And because Jesus does not question the factualness of the claims, it is possible that actual prophecies were made, demons cast out, and some kind of miracles performed even by those who were not genuine believers.

The words of an engraving from the cathedral of Lübeck, Germany, beautifully reflect our Lord's teaching here: Thus speaketh Christ our Lord to us, You call Me master and obey Me not, you call Me light and see Me not, you call Me the way and walk Me not, you call Me life and live Me not, you call Me wise and follow Me not,

you call Me fair and love Me not, you call Me rich and ask Me not, you call Me eternal and seek Me not, if I condemn thee, blame Me not.